MEDIA IN LITURGY WITH EMPHASIS ON THE EUCHARIST

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This paper was researched in order to bring some new ideas to bear on multi-sensory expressions during the Eucharist. It is not an explanation of multi-media or multi-sensory use, but a discussion of different ways of making God's people coming to God's table a dynamic experience rather than a "fish food" and "grape juice" toast.

The use of visuals is not new. Christ, became the first great multi-media minister when he used the things around him to point out and illustrate stories. He spoke of shepherds, sheep, lillies of the valley, birds and fish, and other items of the senses.[1]

Through screens and projectors we can change the visuals in worship. The middle age churches were filled with statues and stained glass windows which stayed the same: we now live in an age geared and dominated by the media.[2] The Christian sacraments have always been multi-

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[1]Jack Krall and Leo Remington, "Using Visuals in Liturgy," (Kansas City: National Catholic Reporter Publishing Co., 1973), Audio Tape.

[2]Ibid.

media worship. Indeed this is their most distinctive feature.[1]

Mananging media begins with planning. The Christian communicator has a wide variety of media at his disposal. There are three basic types: Oral, Audio-visual, and Participatory. The oral media consists mainly of speeches, lectures and sermons. The audience uses both ears and eyes to capture the message. Participatory media includes field trips, demonstrations, spontaneous drama, role playing and simulation. The audience experiences the message by hearing, seeing and doing.[2]

Too often we have buried the Lord's supper under a haystack of words. Multi-media can show people that actions speak louder than words, so they can glimpse the importance of actions in worship.[3] The Lord's Supper should be liturgical in the true sense of the word, which is the "work of the people".[4]

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[1]James White, New Forms Of Worship (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 149.

[2]Eugene W. Lee, "Planning Media," Update, April 1974, p.7.

[3]White, op. cit., p. 124.

[4]John Lilley, "Multi Media Worship," Thesis Theological Cassettes, November 1973, Audio Tape.

John writes in the first epistle of "what we have touched with our hands and seen with our eyes." "The Word who was life," he says excitedly, "that life was made visible." To touch and see as well as hear that life-giving Word--the Word still seeking to become flesh--is what Media ministry is all about.[1]

Basically media is anything that helps man communicate what he is.[2] Multi-media is multi-sensory, that is one sense reinforces what another sense experiences.[3] To make this idea work, people have to get involved. As a congregation becomes involved in media, a committee or a minister of media could be appointed to develop and direct the media experience. This committee or minister is especially important concerning Holy Communion in order to provide creativity without being theatrical.[4]

The use of oral media is most common during the sacrament of communion. Additional dimensions can be added to the service by having the scripture lesson read from the congregation by a small child and an older person. These readings will illustrate the importance of the Word for all ages.[5]

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[1]Joseph Nolan, "How Well Do We Touch and See?," Update, December 1974, p. 6.

[2]Joseph Nolan, "Media in Liturgy," Thesis Theological Cassettes, August 1974, Audio Tape.

[3]Lilley, op. cit.

[4]Lilley, op.cit.

[5]Marge Champion and Marilee Zdenek, "Catch the New Wind," Thesis Theological Cassettes, October 1973, Audio Tape.

A more difficult area to deal with in a multi-sensory service is audio visuals. One area of visual imagery that has not been used in depth is the dance. One often sees stationary images during the service. Dance could give meaning to the service of coming to the table.[1]

Saint John wrote of "what we have seen with our eyes." What do our eyes see when we come to the table? Very often a mediocre picture of Jesus in the chancel, sanctuary, or on the wall. People's opinions differ over what is good art, but one way to help them enjoy art is through slides.[2] Don't let slides be visually distracting from the Word or prayer. Slides are to support the liturgy and not to replace it. Five or six slides for the whole communion liturgy could be enough. The first slide could illustrate a hymn that is being sung; the second slide, the scripture; and other slides could continue the mood that was being created.[3] Another use of slides is for backdrops for actors, readers, or the choirs. Church school picture files have a lot of scenes which can be copied with a slide camera.[4] Slide

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[1]Lilley, op. cit.

[2]Nolan, Update, December 1974, op. cit. p. 7.

[3]Krall, op. cit.

[4]Edward McNulty, "Media Possibilties for Advent and Christmas," Update, November 1974, p. 6.

are available from publishers or public libraries. In tailoring slide pictures for a congregation, one might take his own pictures that capture the mood being created for the service. This is a way to involve members of the congregation who pool their own slides for a particular theme.[1] As the congregation prepares to approach the table and prays for members of its community who are sick, shutin, or in need of special consideration, slides of those people could be projected on the screens during the prayers. This technique could be used in other sections of the service very effectively.[2] Slides offer a greater variety of images in a shorter time and more freedom of composition to the selector than any other medium.[3]

A person from the congregation interested in movies can write, direct, film and edit a program to be shown as prelude or postlude to the communion experience. The children's choir and readers can provide the live sound. Using slides in conjuction with the movie will produce a mixed media presentation. These images can be projected on a large wall, several sheets taped up or on two or more

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[1]Krall, op. cit.

[2]Nolan, Update, August 1974, op. cit. p. 7.

[3]Joseph Nolan, "Patriotism and Your Worship Service," Update, June 1974, p. 8.

screens.[1] Probably one of the best services of short pungent films to us are the "tele-kenetic" films, which have excellent themes for communion.[2]

All different types and textures of banners can be used to emphasize the joy of the service. An example would be to use empty bread wrappers arranged in a random pattern to create a communion banner.[3]

The bulletin or worship folder is also seen in the service. It is a visual communication that even goes home with the worshiper. It is often a poor communicator of the Word which is life. This medium could be improved through the use of poetry, prose, humor and pictures of God in people.[4]

Another piece of audio visual equipment that is readily accessible is the overhead projector. As slides are being projected, use the overhead projector to project words of hymns or readings on a separate screen.[5]

With a renewed emphasis on participation in worship, one area that causes some joy along with some concern is touch. "Peace", the first word spoken by the Risen Lord

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[1] McNulty, op. cit.

[2] Nolan, Thesis, August 1974, op. cit.

[3] White, op. cit. p. 142.

[4] Nolan, Update , December 1974, op. cit. p. 7.

[5] Krall, op. cit.

to his gathered disciples in the Fourth Gospel is a word spoken in Christian worship with renewed frequency in our day. Along with it has come a notable effort to revive an ancient custom of expressing the Peace of the Lord not only with words but also through physical contact among all the worshipers.[1] Touch is difficult for many of us who are western Anglo Saxon. A simple ritual of touch that is gaing acceptance is to join hands around the table or across it while asking a blessing or giving thanks. To join hands is to form a circle of love that nothing will ever break.[2] Another way of showing the peace is through a handshake or handclasp in which we put both hands around another's hand in a warm gesture of good will. We use the handclasp sometimes to convey very deep feelings, as when we approach a sick bed and clasp the hand of the person who is ill or dying.[3]

One idea for first communion is to have the children bring gifts of bread and wine to the altar. They stay there for the prayer of thanksgiving. As the sign of peace, the minister would kiss each child on the cheek;

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[1]Marianne H. Micks, The Future Present (New York: The Seabury Press, 1970), p. 111.

[2]Nolan, Update, December 1974, op. cit. p. 7.

[3]Ibid, p. 8.

the children would then return to the parents and pass the kiss on to the parents, and remain with them to return to the banquet together.[1]

Pews hide people as well as seat them. For short services have the people stand around the table for communion.[2] People say something by coming together. They say "Here we are, we are the temples. Even more we are the offering, the body of Christ." It is important to see people to let them walk together, have a parade, greet each other as they come and gather around the table.[3]

Make a joyfulnoise unto the Lord, with flute, lyre, even harmonica.[4] Music is multi-sensory; not only does one hear it but one sees it, (i.e. choir or organist). We feel it! To often we hide the musicians. We need to see the choir and feel their presence in the service.[5] Music is a most important way of conveying feelings. The choir may also be used to speak words of prayers, poems, scripture during the communion service. If they are set

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[1]Ibid p. 7.

[2]Joseph T. Nolan, "Visual Communication and Worship," Update, September 1974, p. 6.

[3]Ibid. p. 7.

[4]Champion, op. cit.

[5]Lilley, op. cit.

apart from the congregation, a different feeling of sound in the sanctuary is created.[1]

Bread eaten in the worship of the early church was the bread also eaten at home. Its "everydayness" was an integral part of its symbolism in the Eucharist.[2] Communion in the first century was celebrated with round loaves of bread in baskets, and wine in earthenware goblets passed among the people.[3] Contemporary Christians are again emphasizing the use of loaves of good solid bread, not only to make clearer one of the essential actions of the meal, but also to help regain some of the natural, straightforward thanksgiving for food which was a part of the primitive Eucharist.[4] From the beginning, bread and wine were the food and drink which had a special claim on the Christian palate; and both of them have proved inexhaustibly rich symbols to this day. To the detrement of the service many Christians substitute for bread insubstantial and virtually tasteless individual wafers; others replace a cup of wine mixed with water, with miniature individual containers of grape juice.[5]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Micks, op. cit., p. 143.

[3]Myron Bloy, Multi-Media Worship (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), p. 8.

[4]Micks, op. cit., p. 144.

[5]Ibid., p. 143.

Karl Barth put forth the idea in 1959 that worshipers should gather around a simple wooden table fitted with a removable lectern, so that it can serve at one and the same time as pulpit and communion table.[1] We need to begin with a table that looks like a place where one may eat; not a little end table or a buffet, but a dining table where the family of God meets to feast.[2] The table is a sign of providience, spread with food and drink, and of community, the place where people come to share each other even more than food and drink. The communion table (or altar) set with cup and bread and perhaps a candle is a visual sign of simplicity and power. If communion elements are seen before-hand on a table at the entrance to the church their sign value is enhanced. This table can be special; its cloth can have a eucharist motif. The communion bread, expecially a large, single loaf, is far more visible on a flat serving dish or in a bread basket. How much better is this approach to bread then the "insignificiant" (non sign bearing) elements of bread. Wine is more colorful if it is red and more visible if in a glass decanter. Communion cups, large or small, do not have to be present until the actual time; certainly not piled all over the altar during the service.[3] Another return to

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[1]Ibid., p. 131.

[2]White., op. cit., p. 166.

[3]Nolan, Update, Sepetember 1974, op. cit.

the spread on the altar and a member of the congregation bringing forward the loaf of bread and the decanter of wine.[1]

We now have available a fantastic array of possibilities in using sounds and sights to worship God. Though, if the art forms become simply toys that we enjoy playing with, they can be demonic and destructive. And it is very likely that this is what will happen if we do not think through the pastoral, theological, and historic norms of Christian worship. But if we have done this necessary work, we may be able to use these new forms in constructive ways, so that our senses can get in the act and praise their creator.[2]

The gospel of Mark begins with the preaching of John the Baptist. His audience had strayed spirtually and was looking for a deliverer. John's message was one of repentance and preparation for the Messiah. To get his message across, John used a multi-sensory approach; he dressed in camel's hair, ate locusts and wild honey, and preached in the desert. All these symbols were recognized marks of a prophet of God. Crowds from the region of Judea and the city of Jerusalem went out to hear John. They confessed their sins and he baptized them in the Jordan river. John planned well![3]

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[1] White, op. cit. p. 124. [2] Ibid., p. 148

[3] Lee, op. cit. p. 8.

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